ATLAS

RINGO KID

ALL NEW RINGO KID ACTION

RINGO KID

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

NO. 21

10¢

RINGO!! THE NAME THAT MAKES KILLERS TREMBLE!

DON'T MISS "DUEL AT THE BRIDGE!"

RINGO KID

THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT THE OLD COWHAND THAT RANG A BELL IN THE RINGO KID'S MIND! HE KNEW THIS MAN, AND YET HE SENSED HE WAS ABOUT TO COMMIT AN ACT OF UTTER DESPERATION WHICH ONLY THE RINGO KID COULD HALT!

HE'S UP TO SOMETHING...BETTER KEEP AN EYE ON THE OLD-TIMER!

BANK of FLAT ROCK

THE OLD-TIMER BRACED HIS SHOULDERS, SQUARED HIS JAW AND BEGAN TO MOVE...

IT'S NOW OR NEVER!

SUDDENLY...

I THOUGHT I RECOGNIZED YOU, ROSCOE! DON'T BE A FOOL! PUT DOWN THOSE GUNS QUICKLY AND QUIETLY!

WHAT?

LET GO OF ME, RINGO! I KNOW WHAT I'M DOIN'! I'VE GOTTA GO THROUGH WITH IT!

I CAN LET YOU GO AND IN TWO SHAKES THE LAW WILL HAVE YOU PINNED COLD ON A BANK ROBBERY CHARGE!

WHAT'S WRONG HERE? THIS IS NO PLACE TO BE FLASHING HARDWARE!

YOU'RE RIGHT! HE WAS JUST SHOWING ME A NEW BRACE OF COLTS HE BOUGHT! IT'S OKAY, DEPUTY!

ALL RIGHT...NOW LET'S CLEAR AWAY AND TALK THIS THING OVER!

MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT, RINGO!

LATER... I BEEN HOUNDED OFF EVERY SPREAD IN THE TERRITORY! THEY TELL ME I'M TOO OLD TO ROPE OR RIDE...TOO OLD TO ROUND UP STRAYS OR SPLICE A FENCE!

THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS AN OLD COWPOKE! THE OLDER THEY GET, THE BETTER THEY GET!

YOU'RE TOO YOUNG TO UNDERSTAND, BOY! I'M PAST THE PRIME! WHO'S GOIN' TO FEED AN OLD HAND? NOBODY MESSES WITH A USELESS OLD MAN!

IS THAT WHY YOU WERE HITTING THE BANK?

THAT WAS THE END OF THE LINE! I HAD TO GET MONEY TO LIVE! I WISH THAT YOU HADN'T STOPPED ME!

I'M GLAD I *DID*! SADDLE UP, ROSCOE! I'M GOING TO HELP YOU GET A JOB!

LATER... SORRY, OLD-TIMER! I GOT ME SOME YOUNG HANDS AN' THEY WORK FROM SUNUP TO SUNDOWN WITHOUT NO ACHES OR PAINS!

THAT'S HARD TALK TO A MAN WHO'S PUNCHED CATTLE ALL HIS LIFE, TATUM! I THINK ROSCOE CAN DO THE JOB!

IT'S NO DEAL!

LISTEN, I WORKED FOR YOUR DADDY WHEN YOU WERE KNEE HIGH TO A TOAD! I CAN WRANGLE, ROPE AN' BRAND WITH THE BEST OF 'EM!

AN' I CAN OUTSHOOT EVERY FANCY-SPURRED DANDY IN OR OUT OF YOUR BUNKHOUSE!

CRACK

LET'S JINGLE OUR SPURS! I NEVER DID SEE A MULE WHO COULD BE CONVINCED!

ALL RIGHT! I THINK YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE, TATUM!

ALL DAY THEY JOGGED FROM ONE SPREAD TO ANOTHER...

SORRY, YOU'RE TOO OLD!

I'M RUNNING A RANCH, NOT AN OLD MAN'S HOME!

I CAN USE A SPUD PEELER, BUT NOT OLD WRANGLERS!

THERE'S A FORK DOWN THE ROAD YONDER! WE'LL CALL IT A DAY AND PART COMPANY THERE, RINGO!

WE'LL DO NOTHING OF THE KIND! I'VE STILL GOT A FEW IDEAS UNDER MY STETSON!

MEANWHILE, NOT FAR AWAY...

GIT ABOARD, BOYS! THIS'LL BE EASY PICKINGS!

TAKE CARE OF THE FIRE FEEDER, YAPLES! I'LL HANDLE THIS ENGINEER!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

WITH THROTTLE WIDE OPEN, THE SPEEDING EXPRESS ROARED DOWN THE TRACKS...

HERE'S WHERE YOU GET OFF!

BUT, NOT FAR AWAY...

LOOK! THAT TRAIN IS IN A HEAP OF TROUBLE!

THEY HEAVED OFF ONE OF THE CREW! LET'S GET TO HIM!

MOMENTS LATER...

ARE YOU HURT BAD?

NEVER MIND ME! THE TRAIN WILL SLOW DOWN AT *EAGLE PASS* BRIDGE! GET THERE AND STOP THOSE BANDITS!

CAN WE MAKE IT IN TIME?

WE'VE GOT TO! I KNOW A SHORT CUT TO *EAGLE PASS*! LET'S GO!

AND AS THE YELLOWSTONE EXPRESS LURCHED TOWARD THE TRESTLE AT REDUCED SPEED...

LOOK OUT! TWO HOMBRES JUST HOPPED ABOARD!

IN THE NEXT INSTANT...

I'LL HANDLE THESE COYOTES! YOU RAISE SOME GUNSMOKE IN THAT CAB!

THE RINGO KID'S GUNS SOUGHT OUT TARGETS WITH RELENTLESS CONSISTENCY...

NOW THE RINGO KID CLOSED IN...

GET TO ONE SIDE AND BE READY TO JUMP!

MEANWHILE, IN THE CAB...

I'LL FIX YOU ONCE AN' FOR ALL!

START FIXIN', BROTHER!

NOW FREEZE OR HOP OFF THIS IRON HORSE!

CRACK

TIE 'EM UP AND START FEEDING THE BOILER, ROSCOE! THIS TRAIN HAS A SCHEDULE TO MEET!

I AIN'T HAD THIS MUCH FUN SINCE I ROPED MY FIRST DOGGIE!

WE'RE ON SCHEDULE, BOYS! JUST KEEP THAT THROTTLE OPEN AND THE PRESSURE HIGH! THIS IS THE BEST CREW THIS TRAIN EVER HAD!

LATER, AT THE DEPOT...

THIS LINE OWES YOU MEN A GREAT DEBT, JONES! WE CAN USE A MAN LIKE YOU AS A FIREMAN! WILL YOU ACCEPT?

YOU GOT YOURSELF A BOY! I THOUGHT THIS RIDE WAS TAKIN' ME TO MY LAST ROUND-UP! BUT IT'S THE *BEGINNING* OF A *NEW CAREER* FOR ME!

THE END

RINGO KID

REIN IN, SHILO! WHERE'D YOU PICK UP THAT REMUDA OF BRONCS?

M807

HE KNEW THEIR NAMES, BUT MORE THAN THAT, HE KNEW THEIR REPUTATIONS! THESE MEN HAD SCARRED THE FRONTIER, LEAVING BEHIND THEM A WAKE OF MISERY, AND NOW THE *RINGO KID* WAS FACE TO FACE WITH... *THE WRECKERS!*

IT WAS SHILO WHO SPOKE FIRST... LOW, DANGEROUS AND CRAFTY...

WHERE WE GOT THESE CAYUSES IS *OUR* BUSINESS! SIDESTEP YOUR HOSSES AN' LET US PASS!

DON'T GO SPILLING YOUR SPLEEN, SHILO! YOU NEVER LASSOED AN HONEST PONY IN YOUR LIFE!

SUDDENLY...

FREEZE FAST AND HARD! DAD, GET DOWN AND LOOK THOSE HORSES OVER! SEE WHAT BRAND THEY'RE CARRYING, IF ANY!

THESE AREN'T FRESH BRONCS! THEY'VE STILL GOT SADDLE MARKS ON THEM... AND A FEW BRANDS, TOO!

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT! START TALKING, SHILO!

IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG IN ROUNDIN' UP SOME HORSES FOR A FAST SALE?

NOT AT ALL... IF YOU'VE GOT SIGNED RECEIPTS FROM THE OWNERS! LET'S SEE 'EM!

THAT WAS A FOOLISH MOVE... AND *PROOF* YOU **STOLE** THOSE HORSES, SHILO!

CRACK

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, RINGO? YOU IN TROUBLE AGAIN?

NO, BUT THESE HOMBRES ARE! TAKE 'EM IN AND CHARGE THEM WITH HORSE-STEALING!

WELL, SON, IT LOOKS LIKE WE'RE STUCK WITH THIS REMUDA! HOW DO WE GET RID OF THEM?

TURN 'EM LOOSE! I FIGURE THEY'LL LEAD US RIGHT TO THEIR FORMER OWNERS!

TWO HOURS LATER...

LOOK YONDER, DAD! THAT WAGON TRAIN IS WHERE THESE CAYUSES BELONG!

I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT! WELL, LET'S RUN THEM HOME!

GREETINGS, BROTHERS! OUR PRAYERS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED! YOU HAVE BROUGHT BACK THE ANIMALS WHICH WERE STOLEN FROM US!

WHERE ARE YOU FOLKS HEADING?

OUR JOURNEY HAS BEEN HARD AND LONG, BUT WE HOPE TO FIND NEW HOMES IN THIS GREAT LAND! OUR IDEALS HAVE MADE ENEMIES FOR US, BUT WE FEAR NOT!

THERE'S A LOT OF GOOD LAND OUT YONDER FOR THE TAKING! WHY DON'T YOU HEAD INTO TOWN AND REST A SPELL?

A FEW HOURS LATER...

HOLD IT UP, BOYS! THIS WAGON TRAIN JUST PASSIN' THROUGH, OR IS IT STAYIN' IN TOWN?

THEY'RE HOMESTEADERS, SHERIFF! I THINK THEY NEED A REST BEFORE SHOVING AHEAD! CAN YOU PUT THEM UP?

HOMESTEADERS, EH? LOTS OF FOLKS IN TOWN DON'T CARE MUCH FOR NESTERS! ARE THEY HEADING FOR THE FRONTIER?

NO...I THINK THEY CAN FIND GOOD LAND ON THE OPEN RANGE OUTSIDE OF TOWN!

THAT NIGHT...

SURE IT'S FREE RANGE, BUT IN NAME ONLY! WE MAKE OUR LIVING OFF IT! OUR CATTLE FEED ON IT! ARE WE GOING TO GIVE IT AWAY TO A PACK OF NESTERS?

NO! NO! THROW 'EM OUT! GET RID OF 'EM!

NOBODY'S GOT DEEDS TO THE RANGE! IT'S THERE FOR OUR USE! IT ISN'T THERE TO BE SPLIT UP INTO LOTS FOR WORTHLESS DRIFTERS!

YOU TELL 'EM, BATES! THEY AIN'T GETTIN' IT!

JUST A MINUTE! I RECKON EVERYBODY'S GOT A SAY IN THIS ARGUMENT, SO I'D LIKE TO SAY *MY* PIECE!

YOU'VE BEEN TALKING UP A STORM AGAINST GOOD HONEST AMERICANS LIKE YOURSELVES! DO YOU *KNOW* THESE PEOPLE YOU CALL NESTERS? DID YOU *TALK* TO THEM?

WE DON'T TALK TO NESTERS OR HOMESTEADERS!

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OUTSIDE YOU CAN SEE MEN AND WOMEN WITH THE DIRT OF THE PLAINS ON THEIR FACES! THEY'VE BEEN KICKED FROM PILLAR TO POST! NOW THEY WANT TO SETTLE DOWN!

REMEMBER THIS! *YOU* WERE HOMESTEADERS AND NESTERS, TOO! *YOU* FOUGHT YOUR WAY HERE LIKE *THEY* DID! ARE YOU GOING TO SPURN YOUR BROTHERS?

WE'VE HEARD ENOUGH! LET THOSE HOMESTEADERS LOOK ELSEWHERE FOR LAND! WE DON'T WANT THEM!

I KNOW THE KIND OF PEOPLE THEY ARE! THEY ARE HONEST, DILIGENT, RELIGIOUS! THEY WANT NO TROUBLE, SO THEY'LL GO! BUT THIS WILL WEIGH HEAVY ON YOUR CONSCIENCES!

AND AT DAWN THE FOLLOWING DAY, A WEARY AND PATHETIC EXODUS TOOK PLACE...

THIS SCENE WILL LEAVE A SCAR ON THE TOWN OF GANTRY WHICH WILL *NEVER* BE ERASED!

I'M SORRY, FRIEND! I KNOW THAT SOMEWHERE YOU'LL FIND BETTER LAND AND CLOSER FRIENDS THAN YOU HAVE HERE!

WITH THE GOOD LORD'S HELP, WE SHALL! WE BEAR NO MAN A GRUDGE!

IT HAPPENED A FEW HOURS LATER, AND NO MAN IN GANTRY KNEW HOW...

ROUND UP EVERY MAN WHO CAN HAUL WATER! GET BARRELS, WAGONS, BUCKETS! THIS WILL DESTROY THE TOWN!

LIVERY STABLE

TINDER-DRY HOUSES CAUGHT LIKE MATCHWOOD AS HUNGRY FLAMES LEAPED FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE...

THIS TOWN IS DOOMED UNLESS A MIRACLE HAPPENS!

MEANWHILE, ON THE PLAINS OUTSIDE GANTRY...

IT IS NOT RIGHT TO ABANDON OUR BROTHERS AT THIS TIME! WE MUST RETURN AND HELP THEM FIGHT THE FIRES! IT IS OUR DUTY!

AND THE EXODUS RETURNED TO GANTRY TO HELP...

THANK GOODNESS YOU PEOPLE CAME BACK! WE NEED EVERY BIT OF HELP WE CAN GET!

LET THE BOYS FILL THE BUCKETS AND THE MEN FIGHT THE FIRE! *HURRY!*

FOR SIX LONG HOURS THE WEARY TOWNSMEN FOUGHT SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE HOMESTEADERS...

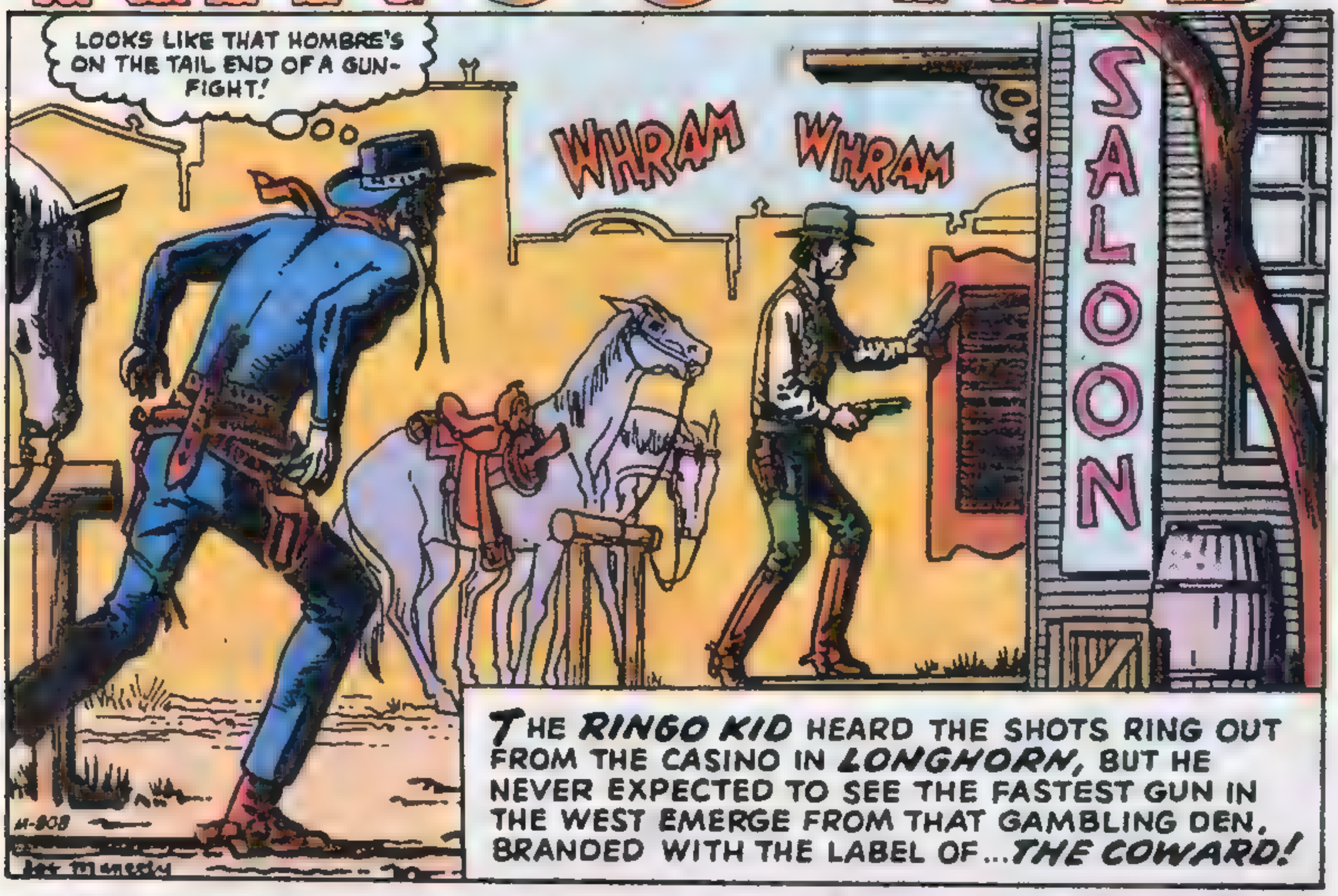
AND THEN, AS THOUGH A GREAT POWER HAD HEEDED THE SILENT PRAYERS, THE CLOUDS GATHERED AND BURST FORTH THEIR TORRENTS...

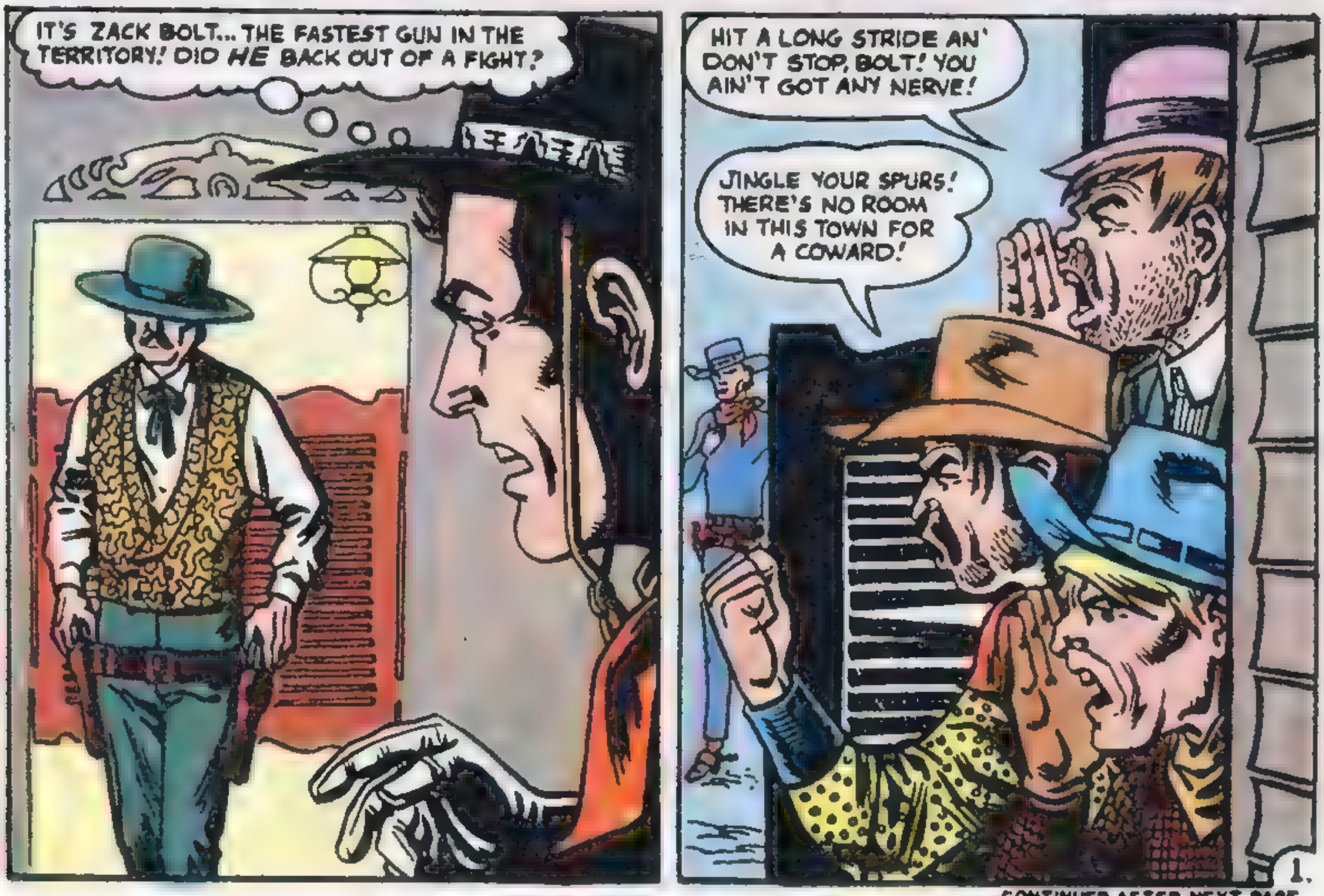
WELCOME HOME, BROTHERS! THIS TOWN IS YOURS AND THE LAND IS YOURS WITH IT! WE ASK ONLY FRIENDSHIP!

OUR FRIENDSHIP HAS ALWAYS BEEN YOURS! THANK YOU!

THE END

RINGO KID


LOOKS LIKE THAT HOMBRE'S ON THE TAIL END OF A GUN-FIGHT!
WHRAM
WHRAM
SALOON
THE RINGO KID HEARD THE SHOTS RING OUT FROM THE CASINO IN LONGHORN, BUT HE NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE THE FASTEST GUN IN THE WEST EMERGE FROM THAT GAMBLING DEN, BRANDED WITH THE LABEL OF...THE COWARD!


IT'S ZACK BOLT... THE FASTEST GUN IN THE TERRITORY! DID HE BACK OUT OF A FIGHT?
HIT A LONG STRIDE AN' DON'T STOP, BOLT! YOU AIN'T GOT ANY NERVE!
JINGLE YOUR SPURS! THERE'S NO ROOM IN THIS TOWN FOR A COWARD!

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ZACK BOLT A COWARD? THAT HOMBRE WOULD SWAP TALK WITH A RATTLER AT SIX INCHES! SOMETHING'S MIGHTY WRONG!

HOWDY, ZACK! THAT RUCKUS BACK YONDER HAS ME PUZZLED! DIDN'T YOU USE YOUR GUNS?

NO, I DIDN'T! AN' I'LL *NEVER* USE THEM AGAIN!

I'M THROUGH WITH HARDWARE... THROUGH BUYING EVERY BREATH I TAKE WITH SIX-GUN LEAD! I NEVER WANT TO SEE GUNS AGAIN!

THIS FRONTIER HASN'T CHANGED MUCH, ZACK! YOU'D BETTER TAKE BACK THE GUNS BEFORE SOMEBODY STARTS GETTING "REPUTATION FEVER"!

REPUTATION, BAH! THAT'S ALL THAT COUNTS! WELL, I'VE LOST MINE AND SOMEBODY ELSE GAINED ONE BECAUSE OF IT!

START MAKING SENSE, ZACK! YOU KNOW HOW FAST WORD SPREADS! SOMEBODY WILL BE JUMPING YOU FOR SURE IF THEY FIND OUT ABOUT THIS!

LET 'EM JUMP!

WANTED

AT THAT MOMENT...

I HEAR YOU TURNED COWARD, ZACK! I AIM TO PROVE IT FOR MYSELF!

COOL YOUR SPURS, AMIGO! THIS MAN ISN'T IN A FIGHTING MOOD!

I'M GIVIN' YOU THREE TO DRAW, ZACK BOLT!

THE COUNT WENT BY AND SUDDENLY...

THREE!

CRACK

PICK UP YOUR HARDWARE AND GET SCARCE!

WHY DID YOU BOTHER, RINGO? THAT LOWDOWN WEASEL DESERVED A BETTER BREAK IF IT'S A REP HE'S HUNTING FOR!

ZACK, I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOUR PLANS ARE, BUT I'D SUGGEST YOU EITHER CLEAR OUT OF TOWN OR STAY OFF THE STREETS!

THANKS! I'LL DO NEITHER!

I'D LIKE TO SEE THE RANNY WHO MADE ZACK BOLT BACK DOWN ON A DRAW!

MINUTES LATER...

REPUTATION, MY SADDLEBAG! I KNOW A COWARD WHEN I SEE ONE! AND ZACK BOLT IS A COWARD!

YOU'RE DEAD WRONG, AMIGO!

ZACK BOLT IS THE FASTEST DRAW THIS SIDE OF THE RIO GRANDE! IF YOU BEAT HIM, IT WAS BY A CRAZY FLUKE!

I BEAT HIM STRAIGHT! HE HAD HIS CHANCE BUT I SHOT BEFORE HE DID! HE DIDN'T EVEN USE HIS GUNS!

YOU WON BY A FLUKE, MISTER! ZACK BOLT COULD PLUG YORE STETSON AND VENTILATE YORE BOOTS WHILE YOU WERE STILL REACHING FOR STEEL!

YOU TALK MIGHTY BIG, MISTER! MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO DO BETTER THAN ZACK DID!

I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU OUTSIDE! STICK YOUR REP UNDER YOUR STETSON TILL THIS PARTY IS OVER!

I'LL BE OUT!

THE SUN BEAT DOWN HARD AND THREW LONG SHADOWS, AS THE RINGO KID WAITED ALONE AND RELAXED...

THEN THE YOUTH NAMED TULSA STALKED OUT ON STRANGELY STIFF LEGS...

I'M READY WHEN YOU ARE!

MAKE YOUR PLAY!

BOTH MEN STREAKED FOR HARDWARE, BUT SUDDENLY SOMETHING HAPPENED...

ZACK BOLT! BUT, WHY...?

BECAUSE I COULDN'T STAND BY AND SEE *MY OWN SON* GUNNED BY THE *RINGO KID!* I COULDN'T LET *YOU* DO WHAT *I* REFUSED TO DO BEFORE!

LOOK HARD IN MY EYES, BOY! DON'T YOU SEE SOMETHING? DON'T YOU SEE A DAY WHEN YOU WERE A MAVERICK AND WE HAD TO PART?

Y-YES... NOW I REMEMBER! MOM AND I LEFT WHILE YOU FOUGHT OFF A COMANCHE RAID! WE TH-THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD!

NOW I UNDERSTAND *WHY* ZACK BOLT PREFERRED TO BE A "COWARD"! SEEMS TO ME HE'S EVEN *BRAVER* THAN I FIGURED HIM FOR!

THE END

FOR FIVE LONG YEARS, BRAD TULLY STRODE THE STREETS OF CHEYENNE, AN UNEASY KING WEARING AN INVISIBLE CROWN, IN A RUGGED LAND WHERE A MISTAKE IN JUDGMENT MIGHT MEAN SUDDEN DEATH, AND WHERE EACH MINUTE MIGHT BRING ANOTHER CHALLENGE TO HIS TITLE OF...

THE FASTEST GUN IN CHEYENNE!

HERE IT COMES AGAIN! SOME WILD YOUNG KID WANTIN' TO OUTDRAW ME, RISK HIS HIDE OR MINE, MAKE HIMSELF A HERO TO THIS PACK OF VULTURES! YEAH, I CAN FEEL IT COMIN'!

FEED

M-765

BRAD FELT IT COMING, BUT THE CHALLENGE DIDN'T COME! NOT THIS TIME! HE COULDN'T LET THE RELIEF HE FELT SHOW ON HIS FACE...

GOOD MORNING, MR. TULLY!

GOOD MORNING, CHICK!

THE VULTURES ARE WATCHIN', SO IT'S GOT TO COME! THEY GOT A WAY OF SMELLIN' OUT A FIGHT!

BLACKSMITH

THESE YOUNG FOOLS, WISHIN' THEY WERE IN MY BOOTS! IF THEY ONLY KNEW WHAT IT'S LIKE HAVIN' MY REPUTATION! "THE FASTEST GUN IN CHEYENNE"! I CURSE THE DAY I LAID CLAIM TO THAT HANDLE!

BRAD WAS REMEMBERING THAT DAY, FIVE YEARS BACK, WHEN HE WAS JUST ANOTHER COWPOKE WHO'D COME INTO TOWN ON HIS DAY OFF... HE HADN'T BEEN THERE A HALF-HOUR WHEN THE TROUBLE BEGAN...

HOLD ON THERE, SHARP! THAT'S MY PONY YOU'RE TAKIN'!

YOUR PONY! YOU HEAR THAT, BOYS? THAT LOCO COWHAND SAYS THIS CHESTNUT MARE IS *HIS* PONY! YOU GOT *PROOF*, MISTER?

THE MARE HAD BEEN BRAD'S MOUNT, BUT HE'D KNOWN FRANK SHARP BY REPUTATION... A VICIOUS GUNSLINGER, ONE OF WYOMING'S MOST FEARED BADMEN! AND HE KNEW SHARP HAD BEEN LOOKING FOR A FIGHT...

I GOT NO PROOF, SHARP, EXCEPT MY WORD! I WON THAT PONY PLAYIN' BLACK-JACK WITH A FELLER TRAVELIN' THRU TOWN! HE LEFT ON THE LAST STAGE OUT OR HE'D TELL YOU!

I SAY YOU'RE A LIAR, COWBOY! I SAY THIS HOSS IS *MINE*! YOU LOOKIN' FOR TROUBLE?

BRAD REMEMBERED HOW HE'D FELT THE RUSH OF BLOOD TO HIS FACE, AND HOW HE'D TRIED TO KEEP A REIN ON HIS TEMPER, BUT COULDN'T...

YOU'RE MISTAKEN, SHARP! LEASTWISE, YOU GOT NO PROOF SHE'S *YOURS*, EITHER!

YOU'RE CALLIN' *ME* A LIAR! YOU'RE SURE LOOKIN' FOR A QUICK TRIP TO BOOT-HILL!

YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOIN', BRAD! SHARP'S TH' FASTEST GUN IN CHEYENNE!

IF I GOT TO FIGHT FOR WHAT'S MINE, I'LL FIGHT, THAT'S ALL!

BRAD REMEMBERED HOW HUSHED THE CROWD HAD BEEN! HE RECALLED HOW FRANK SHARP HAD MOVED OUT TO THE CENTER OF THE ROAD, WITH THE SURE, SWIFT MOVEMENT OF A COUGAR! SHARP HAD FACED HIM, NOT SEEMING TO BREATHE! THEN IT HAPPENED IN A SPLIT-SECOND!

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FOR A SECOND OR TWO, SHARP HAD JUST STOOD THERE SWAYING, A SURPRISED LOOK ON HIS FACE! THEN HE HAD FALLEN TO THE GROUND, A BEATEN, SHAMED MAN!

THE CROWD HAD CLOSED IN ON BRAD WHOOPING THEMSELVES HOARSE! AND THE MAN WHO'D COME INTO TOWN AS JUST ANOTHER COWBOY, NOW HAD FOUND HIMSELF A HERO, THE FASTEST GUN IN CHEYENNE!

BRAD TULLY RECALLED, TOO, THOSE FIRST WEEKS, WHEN HE'D SWAGGER DOWN THE STREET EVERY DAY, THAT PROUD, COCKY GRIN ON HIS FACE...

THAT'S THE MAN... THE ONE THAT OUT-DREW FRANK SHARP!

HOTEL

AND HE'D NEVER TIRE OF TELLING THE YOUNG MEN HOW HE DID IT...

I KEPT MY EYES ON SHARP'S EYES! THEY NARROWED JUST THAT LITTLE SPECK THAT TOLD ME HE WAS GOIN' FOR HIS SIX-GUN! THAT'S WHAT YOU GOT TO DO, WATCH THE OTHER MAN'S EYES!

BEFORE LONG, BRAD HAD HAD REASON TO REGRET HAVING BEEN SO FREE WITH HIS ADVICE! FOR SOME OF THE YOUNG COWPOKES WERE SUDDENLY BRASH, GLORY-SEEKING MEN...

I GOT NOTHIN' AGAINST YOU, ROBERTS!

NOW YOU GOT SOMETHIN', TULLY, OR MAYBE YOU'RE SCARED!

THAT WAS WHEN BRAD TULLY HAD LEARNED THAT THERE DIDN'T HAVE TO BE ANY RIGHT AND WRONG TO BRING ON A GUNFIGHT! HE'D FOUND HIMSELF OBLIGED TO DEFEND HIS TITLE AS THE FASTEST GUN IN CHEYENNE AGAINST EVERY AMBITIOUS UPSTART THAT CROSSED HIS PATH...

THAT'S WHAT BRAD WAS THINKING ABOUT AS HE AMBLED ALONG CHEYENNE'S MAIN DRAG THAT DAY... THERE WAS NO SWAGGER TO HIS GAIT, NO DEFIANT GRIN ON HIS FACE...

FIVE LONG YEARS CARRYIN' THE BURDEN OF A NAME! I'M SICK OF IT! BUT THERE'S NO QUITTIN'! I FIGHT OR GET CALLED "YELLOW," AND I'D SOONER DIE THAN BE CALLED THAT!

HEY, YOU! BRAD TULLY! COME BACK HERE!

THERE IT IS! I KNOW THE SOUND IN HIS VOICE!

THE NICK HADLY KID! I NEVER REALIZED HE'D GROWN UP ALREADY! AND LOOK AT HIM STANDIN' THERE LIKE HE OWNED THE WORLD AND WAS DARIN' ME TO TAKE IT FROM HIM!

WELL, TULLY, I'M WAITIN' FOR YUH!

BRAD SAUNTERED SLOWLY TOWARD NICK HADLY, AND THERE WAS NO ANGER IN HIS HEART, EVEN WHEN THE KID DANCED BACK WILDLY AND HURLED HIS CHALLENGE...

YOU'RE YOUNG FOR THAT KIND OF THING, NICK!

TWENTY-THREE, TULLY! YUH AIN'T GONNA CHICKEN OUT ON ME! YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO ***SHOW*** ME YOU'RE TOP GUN IN THIS TOWN! I'M GONNA DRAW FAST! ***REAL FAST***! AND I'M GONNA OUTDRAW YUH, MISTER BIG MAN!

AND FINALLY IT HAPPENED, AS BRAD HAD ALWAYS KNOWN IT WOULD ONE DAY! THIS KID HADLY, WAS JUST A SPLIT-SECOND FASTER ON THE DRAW!

BLAM!

IT WAS OVER JUST LIKE THAT! A FAST SHOT AND A CROWN HAD TOPPLED, A REIGN HAD ENDED!

WE BETTER SEE ABOUT THE SHOULDER, TULLY!

I NEVER HAD ANYTHING HURT SO BAD OR FEEL SO GOOD! LOOK AT YOUNG NICK SWAGGER THERE!

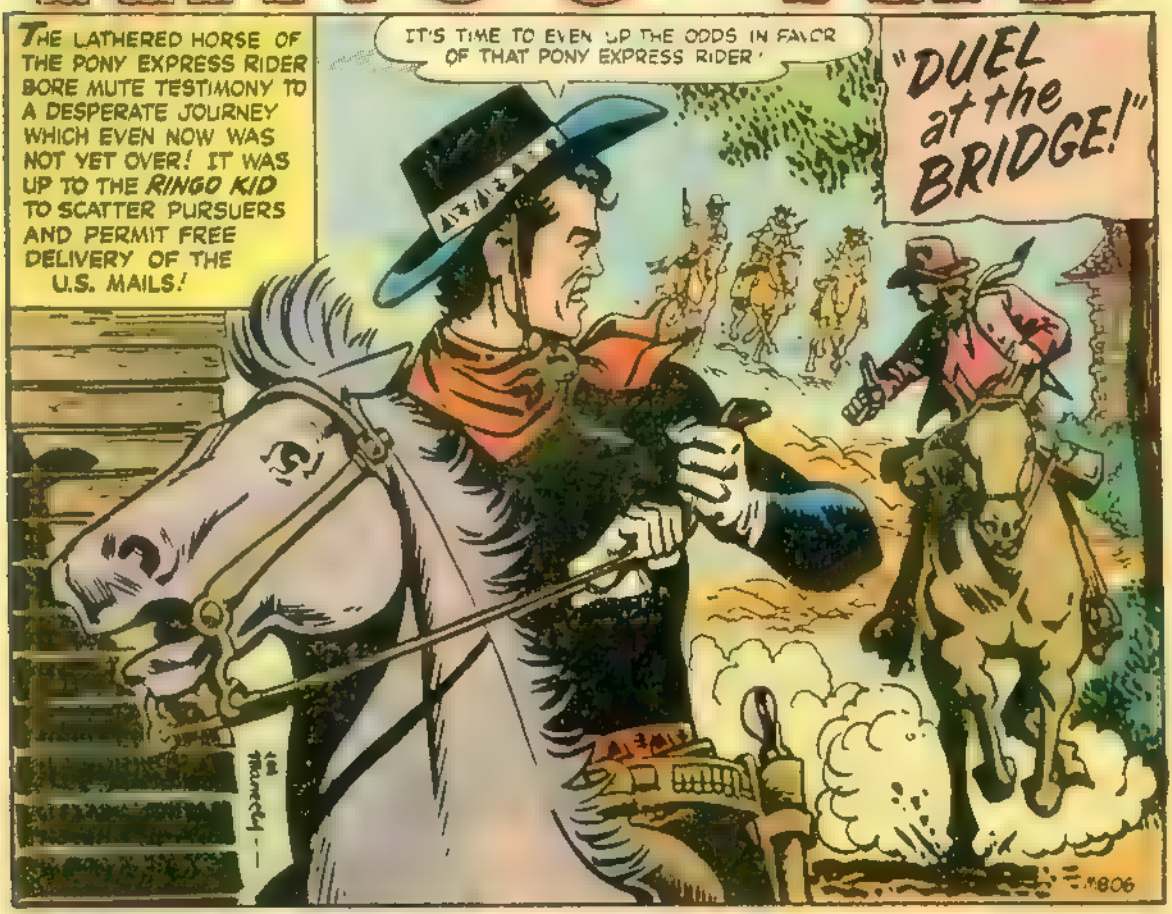
SUDDENLY, BRAD TULLY'S LAUGHTER RANG THRU THE STREET!

I REMEMBER ***YOU*** STRUTTIN' LIKE THAT ONCE! SAY, WHAT'S SO FUNNY, TULLY?

I FEEL LIKE A MAN THAT'S BEEN CONDEMNED FOR FIVE YEARS AND JUST SET FREE! BEFORE LONG, YOUNG NICK WILL HAVE THAT BAD FEELIN' IN THE PIT OF HIS STOMACH! AND EVERY TIME HE WALKS THIS STREET, HE'LL NEED EYES IN BACK OF HIS HEAD! SURE I'M LAUGHIN', SHERIFF! ***I'M FREE! A NEW*** MAN'S THE FASTEST GUN IN CHEYENNE NOW!

THE END

RINGO KID


THE LATHERED HORSE OF THE PONY EXPRESS RIDER BORE MUTE TESTIMONY TO A DESPERATE JOURNEY WHICH EVEN NOW WAS NOT YET OVER! IT WAS UP TO THE RINGO KID TO SCATTER PURSUERS AND PERMIT FREE DELIVERY OF THE U.S. MAILS!
IT'S TIME TO EVEN UP THE ODDS IN FAVOR OF THAT PONY EXPRESS RIDER!
"DUEL at the BRIDGE!"

WITH ONE MIGHTY SURGE THE STALLION BORE HIS MASTER INTO THE BATTLE...

A HEAD-ON COLLISION WAS IMMINENT BETWEEN THE TWO JUGGERNAUTS...

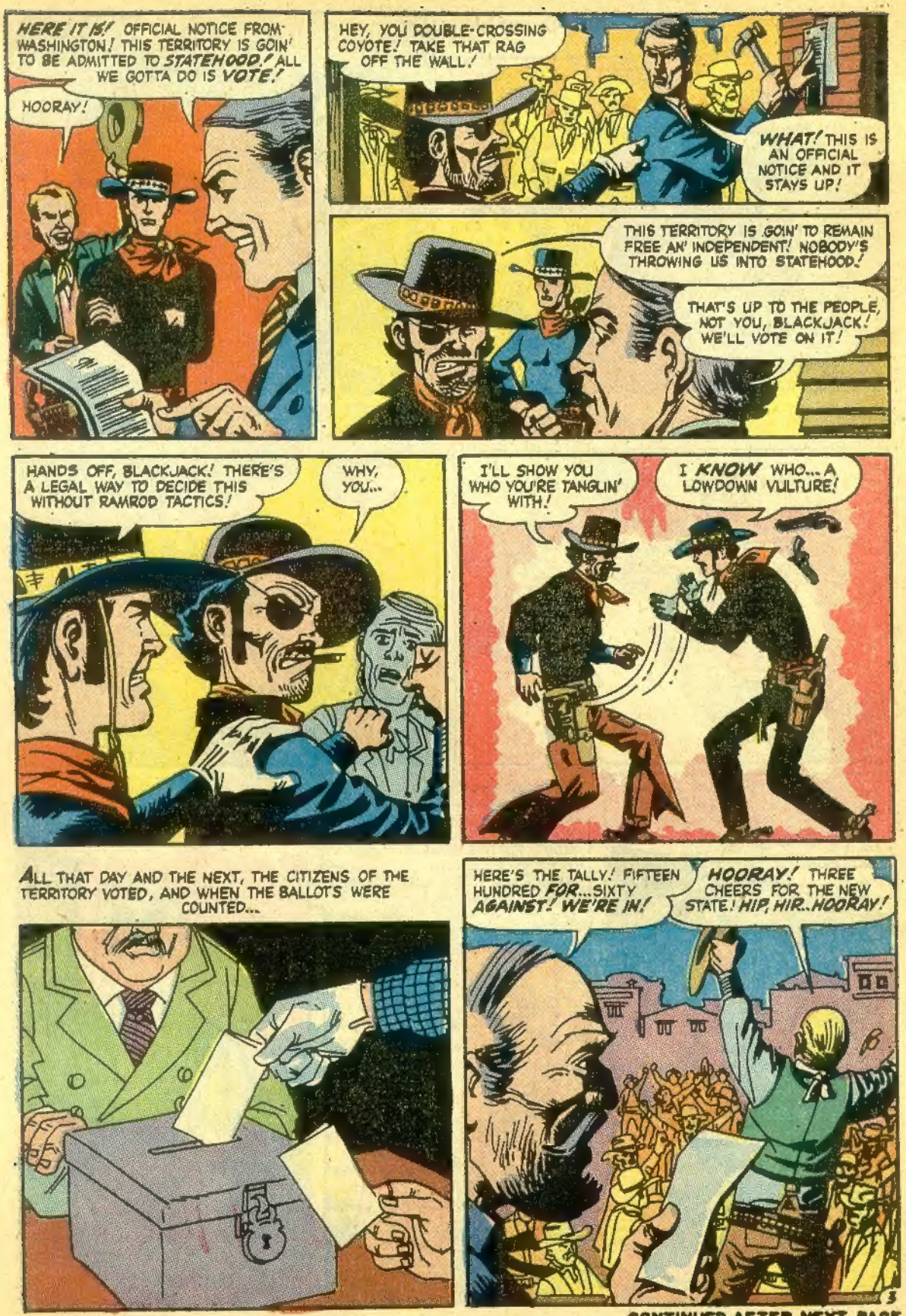
IT WAS THE RAMROD WHO DUCKED AT THE LAST MOMENT... BUT IT WAS TOO LATE...

THE HAMMERING COLTS FOUND THEIR MARKS AND A SPLIT-SECOND LATER...

I DON'T REPRESENT THE LAW IN THIS TOWN, SO YOU'D ALL BETTER SADDLE UP AND MOVE OUT, PRONTO!
WE GOT A STAKE IN THIS TOWN AND WE'LL BE BACK!

A FEW MINUTES LATER...

THEY JUMPED ME OUTSIDE LANDY'S CROSSING AND TAILED ME IN! IF IT WASN'T FOR THIS HOMBRE, THEY'D HAVE NAILED ME FOR SURE!
THEY WON'T BOTHER YOU AGAIN! WHAT WERE THEY AFTER?


HERE IT IS! OFFICIAL NOTICE FROM WASHINGTON! THIS TERRITORY IS GOIN' TO BE ADMITTED TO STATEHOOD! ALL WE GOTTA DO IS VOTE!
HOORAY!
HEY, YOU DOUBLE-CROSSING COYOTE! TAKE THAT RAG OFF THE WALL!
WHAT! THIS IS AN OFFICIAL NOTICE AND IT STAYS UP!
THIS TERRITORY IS GOIN' TO REMAIN FREE AN' INDEPENDENT! NOBODY'S THROWING US INTO STATEHOOD!
THAT'S UP TO THE PEOPLE, NOT YOU, BLACKJACK! WE'LL VOTE ON IT!
HANDS OFF, BLACKJACK! THERE'S A LEGAL WAY TO DECIDE THIS WITHOUT RAMROD TACTICS!
WHY, YOU...
I'LL SHOW YOU WHO YOU'RE TANGLIN' WITH!
I KNOW WHO... A LOWDOWN VULTURE!
ALL THAT DAY AND THE NEXT, THE CITIZENS OF THE TERRITORY VOTED, AND WHEN THE BALLOTS WERE COUNTED...
HERE'S THE TALLY! FIFTEEN HUNDRED FOR...SIXTY AGAINST! WE'RE IN!
HOORAY! THREE CHEERS FOR THE NEW STATE! HIP, HIP..HOORAY!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

EARLY NEXT MORNING...
SHERIFF, WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BALLOTS?
SAM WHITNEY HAS 'EM STRAPPED IN HIS POUCHES FOR DELIVERY TO FORT SLATER! WHY DO YOU ASK?
BLACKJACK EGAN AND HIS MOB JUST LEFT TOWN ON SAM'S TRAIL! THOSE BALLOTS MAY NEVER REACH FORT SLATER!
MEANWHILE...
THEY'RE GAININ' ON ME! I HOPE BESS IS HOME! SHE CAN GET THESE BALLOTS OVER TO THE FORT IF THOSE SIDEWINDERS GET ME!
SUDDENLY...
DAD! WHAT'S HAPPENING?
HURRY, BESS! TAKE THE SADDLE POUCHES AND GET 'EM TO FORT SLATER!
ALL RIGHT, DAD!
AS THE GIRL THUNDERED AWAY...
DON'T LOOK SO FRIGHTENED, MA'AM! I'M HERE TO SEE THAT THOSE BALLOTS REACH THE FORT!
THANK GOODNESS! I THOUGHT YOU WERE ONE OF THOSE BANDITS!
MINUTES LATER...
THIS IS A SHORT CUT... BUT THE BRIDGE IS TOO NARROW FOR A HORSE!
I'LL HOLD THEM OFF! TRY TO GET ACROSS BY YOURSELF... BUT HURRY!
A STREAM OF SIX-GUN LEAD BURNED THE AIR BETWEEN DEFENDER AND ATTACKERS...
CRACK
CRACK
SPREAD OUT, BOYS! SOME OF YOU STOP THAT GIRL! THE REST OF US WILL BRACE THIS TWO-GUN RANNY!

BUT THE RINGO KID'S LEAD WAS TOO HOT AND TOO DEADLY!
RUSH HIM! HEY, MATHEWS! SEE IF YOU CAN SHATTER THEM BRIDGE ROPES WITH YOUR SHOTGUN!
OKAY, BLACKJACK!
YOU'LL PAY A HIGH PRICE FOR THOSE BALLOTS, YOU COYOTES!
I BUSTED THE GUY ROPES! THERE GOES THE BRIDGE!
HELP!
LIE DOWN, RATTLER! I'VE GOT TO TAKE CARE OF THAT WEASEL BEHIND THE ROCK!
GET OUT IN THE OPEN AND KEEP YOUR HANDS HIGH!
CRACK
IT WAS LIKE A HORRIBLE NIGHTMARE! HOW CAN WE DELIVER THE BALLOTS NOW?
WE'LL GET 'EM THERE SOMEHOW! YOU'D BETTER REST UP A MINUTE, MISS!
BUT MOMENTS LATER...
SORRY WE COULDN'T GET HERE EARLIER! THOSE BALLOTS WILL BE SAFE WITH US, RINGO!
WHEN OUR STATE IS BORN, IT WON'T FORGET WHAT YOU AND SAM WHITNEY'S DAUGHTER DID, RINGO! WE'RE PROUD OF YOU BOTH!